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Spies / *Reporters as spooks*

Stansfield Turner, the head of the Central Intelligence Agency, believes there's nothing wrong in hiring journalists to work as spies. He's wrong; when the government secretly hires reporters to act as spies, the government seriously undermines the important independent nature of the press.

It serves no purpose to argue that reporters ought to resist employment by the CIA or any government agency; even if none should accept employment the fact that the CIA publicly acknowledges its willingness to hire them undermines the credibility of the craft.

American reporters and foreign correspondents can't fulfill their functions as independent seekers of fact if the public believes there is the possibility they may be in the secret employ of the government.

Turner is aware that American foreign correspondents are prized as spies since they routinely ask questions without creating suspicion and because they usually have good sources within foreign governments.

But that's precisely the reason why reporters *shouldn't* be bought by the CIA. It's imperative in a democracy that the press operate freely to inform all Americans, including the CIA, but not only the CIA. The First Amendment didn't evolve by happenstance or whim; our forefathers recognized the importance of an unfettered press to any viable and successful free country.

The fact that Stansfield Turner has no qualms about penetrating the barrier separating the government and the press is distressing. In the long term, he's not serving his country's best interests.